

National Transportation Safety Board  
Washington, DC 20594

Brief of Accident

Adopted 09/26/2001

DCA99MA088 File No. 10571	09/25/1999	VOLCANO, HI	Aircraft Reg No. N411WL	Time (Local): 17:26 HST		
Make/Model:	Piper / PA-31-350			Fatal	Serious	Minor/None
Engine Make/Model:	Lycoming / TIO-540-J2BD		Crew	1	0	0
Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed		Pass	9	0	0
Number of Engines:	2					
Operating Certificate(s):	On-demand Air Taxi					
Name of Carrier:	BIG ISLAND AIR INC					
Type of Flight Operation:	Sightseeing; Non-scheduled; Domestic; Passenger Only					
Reg. Flight Conducted Under:	Part 135: Air Taxi & Commuter					
Last Depart. Point:	KONA , HI			Condition of Light:	Day	
Destination:	Local Flight			Weather Info Src:	Witness	
Airport Proximity:	Off Airport/Airstrip			Basic Weather:	Instrument Conditions	
				Lowest Ceiling:	6000 Ft. AGL, Overcast	
				Visibility:		
				Wind Dir/Speed:		
				Temperature (°C):	Unk/Nr	
				Precip/Obscuration:		
Pilot-in-Command	Age: 51			Flight Time (Hours)		
Certificate(s)/Rating(s)				Total All Aircraft:	11500	
Airline Transport; Flight Instructor; Commercial; Multi-engine Land; Single-engine Land;				Last 90 Days:	13	
Instrument Ratings				Total Make/Model:	Unk/Nr	
Airplane				Total Instrument Time:	2010	

The full report (NTSB/AAB-01-02) is available on the NTSB Web site. See <http://www.nts.gov/Publictn/publictn.htm> for details.

On September 25, 1999, about 1726 Hawaiian standard time, Big Island Air flight 58, a Piper PA-31-350 (Chieftain), N411WL, crashed on the northeast slope of the Mauna Loa volcano near Volcano, Hawaii. The pilot and all nine passengers on board were killed, and the airplane was destroyed by impact forces and a postimpact fire. The sightseeing tour flight was operating under 14 Code of Federal Regulations Part 135 as an on-demand air taxi operation. A visual flight rules flight plan was filed, and visual meteorological conditions existed at the Keahole-Kona International Airport, Kona, Hawaii, from which the airplane departed about 1622. The investigation determined that instrument meteorological conditions prevailed in the vicinity of the accident site.

Brief of Accident (Continued)

DCA99MA088				
File No. 10571	09/25/1999	VOLCANO, HI	Aircraft Reg No. N411WL	Time (Local): 17:26 HST

---

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER  
Phase of Operation: CLIMB

Findings

1. (F) TERRAIN CONDITION - MOUNTAINOUS/HILLY
2. (C) PLANNING/DECISION - IMPROPER - PILOT IN COMMAND
3. (C) VFR FLIGHT INTO IMC - CONTINUED - PILOT IN COMMAND
4. (F) FLIGHT/NAVIGATION INSTRUMENT(S) - IMPROPER USE OF - PILOT IN COMMAND
5. (F) PREFLIGHT BRIEFING SERVICE - NOT USED - PILOT IN COMMAND
6. (F) PROCEDURES/DIRECTIVES - NOT FOLLOWED - PILOT IN COMMAND

Findings Legend: (C) = Cause, (F) = Factor

---

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident as follows.  
the pilot's decision to continue visual flight into instrument meteorological conditions (IMC) in an area of cloud-covered mountainous terrain. Contributing to the accident were the pilot's failure to properly navigate and his disregard for standard operating procedures, including flying into IMC while on a visual flight rules flight plan and failure to obtain a current preflight weather briefing.